

A Closer Look

Gender Dynamics in Violent Extremism and Countering Violent Extremism in Southeast Asia

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This policy brief examines gender from the perspective of women's roles in preventing and countering violent extremism (P/CVE) in Southeast Asia and identifies key challenges, gaps, and needs of national and regional actors in advancing a gender sensitive approach.¹ The brief draws on desk research and extensive consultations with a range of civil society actors, experts, policymakers, and practitioners (henceforth referred to as interlocutors) from Indonesia, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, and Thailand, including a regional workshop convened by the Global Center on Cooperative Security (Global Center) in Bangkok.² It is also informed by experiences and insights gained from gender-sensitive P/CVE projects undertaken by civil society organizations in the region, supported by the Global Center and the government of the Netherlands, which are highlighted in an appendix at the end of the brief. The conclusion offers key recommendations for regional and national actors, international donors, and program implementers to consider in advancing gender sensitive P/CVE policies, strategies, and programs in Southeast Asia.

TERRORISM AND VIOLENT EXTREMISM IN SOUTHEAST ASIA

In May 2018, a spate of terrorist attacks rattled the port city of Surabaya in Indonesia. While the country is no stranger to terrorism, what shocked many was that a number of the attacks were carried out by entire families, including mothers and their young children, marking the first successful execution of a female suicide bombing in Indonesia. For many experts, however, profiles of these perpetrators came as no surprise; the children and young adults were found to have been isolated and indoctrinated in militant ideology by their parents.³

Like the attacks in Surabaya, terrorist activities in the region are increasingly linked to the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) and its affiliates, to which more than 60 terrorist groups in Southeast Asia have pledged their support.⁴ ISIL's shrinking control of

1 Though gender analysis and integration is meant to acknowledge all genders, this policy brief focuses on women and girls, an oft-marginalized and overlooked group in analyses of violent extremism and preventing and countering violent extremism.

2 "Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism in Southeast Asia: Advancing Gender Inclusion and Women's Participation," Global Center on Cooperative Security, May 2018, Bangkok, <http://www.globalcenter.org/events/preventing-and-countering-violent-extremism-in-southeast-asia-advancing-gender-inclusion-and-womens-participation/>.

3 "Indonesian Children Who Joined Suicide Attacks in Surabaya Kept Isolated By Parents," Reuters, 15 May 2018, <https://www.straitstimes.com/asia/se-asia/indonesian-children-who-joined-suicide-attacks-in-surabaya-kept-isolated-by-parents>.

4 Rohan Gunaratna, "The Caliphate's Influence in Southeast Asia," University of Nottingham, *IAPS Dialogue*, <https://iapsdialogue.org/2017/02/14/the-caliphates-influence-in-southeast-asia/>.

territory in Iraq and Syria raises concerns that more fighters from within and outside Southeast Asia will shift their attention to the region, as evidenced by the five-month long siege of Marawi in southern Philippines. Despite counterterrorism and counterintelligence efforts in Indonesia and Malaysia in thwarting terrorist attacks in recent years, the threat of terrorism and violent extremism remains high due to factors driving domestic radicalization to violent extremism and the return of foreign fighters from Iraq and Syria. There are already noticeable trends of ISIL relying on familial networks and encouraging women to carry out attacks in the region – trends that require attention and understanding of gender dynamics to adequately address resulting threats.⁵ Additionally, violence in Myanmar’s Rakhine State and its spillover effects in Bangladesh are a source of regional concern, both because of the Buddhist/ultranationalist extremist rhetoric and violence, and concern that violent Islamist groups may capitalize on the plight of the Rohingya to attract and recruit new supporters and fighters.⁶

As policymakers and practitioners in Southeast Asia increasingly recognize the importance of investing in preventive measures that complement counterterrorism operations, it is critical to integrate a gender analysis when developing related national action plans, strategies, and programs to address the threat, whether by groups, families, returning or relocating foreign fighters, or lone actors.

Understanding gender dynamics and integrating a gender perspective means that policymakers, practitioners, and program implementers account for the different experiences, impacts, and needs of women, girls, men, and boys with regard to their development and security. It also considers their varying access to and control of resources, legal rights, and sociocultural beliefs and practices, and examines how all of

these dynamics may change over time.⁷ This brief examines gender dynamics in violent extremism and P/CVE specifically as they pertain to women and girls.

GENDER, VIOLENT EXTREMISM, AND P/CVE IN SOUTHEAST ASIA

In taking stock of the current environment, it is important to note that a nuanced understanding of gender dynamics and specific awareness about the multiple roles of women in violent extremism and P/CVE has evolved over the years. The conversation has shifted from describing women and girls primarily as victims, to recognizing their agency not only as preventers and peacebuilders, but also as sympathizers, supporters, and perpetrators of violent extremism and terrorism. Nevertheless, emerging international norms and principles remain rudimentary and lack a sophisticated appreciation of the impact of broader gender norms and identity.

Some countries in the region, such as the Philippines, have robust national legislation on gender equality and have actively engaged women in relevant peace processes, but the national P/CVE plans and strategies in the region have not prioritized gender. In cases where gender is included, provisions are often symbolic and difficult to operationalize. For example, the Trilateral Meeting on Security between the Philippines, Indonesia, and Malaysia referred to women only insofar as to protect and safeguard them as a “vulnerable group” from terrorism, while a Sub-Regional Meeting referenced strengthening women’s empowerment as part of efforts to address the root causes and underlying conditions of terrorism.⁸

Framing the topic of gender and violent extremism within the larger context of violence and conflict can help illuminate why such oversight limits comprehensive security and prevention efforts. This section

5 Kirsten E. Schulze, “The Surabaya Bombings and the Evolution of the Jihadi Threat in Indonesia,” *CTC Sentinel*, June/July 2018, Vol. 11, Issue 6, <https://ctc.usma.edu/surabaya-bombings-evolution-jihadi-threat-indonesia>.

6 Francis Chan, “ISIS, Al-Qaeda drawn to crisis in Rakhine State,” *The Straits Times*, 20 September 2017, <http://www.straitstimes.com/asia/se-asia/isis-al-qaeda-drawn-to-crisis-in-rakhine-state>.

7 Naureen Chowdhury Fink, Sara Zeiger, and Rafia Bhulai eds., “A Man’s World? Exploring the Roles of Women in Countering Terrorism and Violent Extremism,” Hedayah and The Global Center on Cooperative Security, April 2016, http://www.globalcenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/AMansWorld_FULL.pdf.

8 Joint Statement, Trilateral Meeting on Security Among the Philippines, Indonesia, and Malaysia, Manila, Philippines, 22 June 2017, <https://www.dfa.gov.ph/228-statements/13061-joint-statement-trilateral-meeting-on-security-among-the-philippines-indonesia-and-malaysia>; and Joint Statement, Sub-Regional Meeting On Foreign Terrorist Fighters And Cross Border Terrorism, Manado-Indonesia, 29 July 2017. <http://parlinfo.aph.gov.au/parlInfo/search/display/display.w3p;query=Id%3A%22media%2Fpressrel%2F5426809%22>.

therefore explores key trends in the discussion around gender, violent extremism, and P/CVE as it relates to Southeast Asia.

Gendered pathways to engagement in violent extremism

A gendered perspective on engagement in violent extremism considers if and how men and women follow different pathways to joining and supporting terrorist groups and how gendered narratives and dynamics inform recruitment and mobilization efforts. This is particularly relevant in Southeast Asia, where increasing numbers of women are actively supporting ISIL and their affiliates and other terrorist groups. A recent study found that of the women worldwide who traveled to Iraq and Syria, Southeast Asia had the highest rate of female returnees at 42 percent.⁹

To explain this, experts point to the highly gendered nature of ISIL's recruitment strategy, which often underscores the crucial role of women to their mission and depicts engagement as an alternative means of female empowerment.¹⁰ In Indonesia, for instance, some analysts observe a “new activism” of women in violent extremist movements, in which they have moved beyond “reproductive and nurturing roles” to recruitment (both online and offline), providing or facilitating material support to families of imprisoned and “martyred” fighters, or planning or perpetrating suicide attacks.¹¹ The increase in both attempted and successful female suicide bombing in the past two years highlights this shifting role.

Gender-based discrimination

Violent extremism and P/CVE should be considered within the broader context of gender equality and restrictions on women's freedoms and rights, as well

as instances of gender-based violence and general criminality. This is an important framing because key indicators of the spread of violent extremist ideologies include increased discrimination against women and girls, including their rights to education, public life, and decisions over their bodies.¹² In Indonesia, for example, the National Commission on Violence Against Women (*Komnas Perempuan*) found that 154 laws across 140 regions are discriminatory against women and religious minorities, including laws that restrict women's clothing, curfews, or mobility.¹³ Systematic and institutional discrimination against women reinforces gender inequalities and limits women's upward mobility and ability to participate freely in society and the economy. Some analysts, including a Malaysian interlocutor, therefore argue that “countering violent extremism means countering gender inequality, and countering the growing misogyny, sexism, and moral policing of women and their bodies.”¹⁴ Although gender discrimination may frequently correlate to rising levels of violent extremism, further research is needed to understand the potential links between violent extremism and gender-based discrimination.

Many interlocutors also voiced deep concern for what they see as worsening intolerance across the region, including hate speech against religious and sexual minorities and those who support gender equality. Rising nationalism, religious fundamentalism and exclusivity, and intolerance have negative effects on gender equality and women's socioeconomic and political mobility. In Myanmar, for example, a bill that would protect women from all forms of violence was opposed by Buddhist nationalists because they feared it would weaken other laws that banned polygamy and religious conversion.¹⁵ Indeed, studies have shown links between gendered hierarchies and nationalism where “patriarchal nationalism provides

9 Joana Cook and Gina Vale, “From Daesh to ‘Diaspora’: Tracing the Women and Minors of Islamic State,” International Centre for the Study of Radicalisation, July 2018, https://icsr.info/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/Women-in-ISIS-report_20180719_web.pdf.

10 Louisa Tarras-Wahlberg, “Promises of Paradise? A Study on Official ISIS-Propaganda Targeting Women,” (Master's thesis, Swedish Defence University, 2016).

11 Institute for Policy Analysis of Conflict (IPAC), “Mothers to Bombers: The Evolution of Indonesian Women Extremists,” January 2017, http://file.understandingconflict.org/file/2017/01/IPAC_Report_35.pdf.

12 UN Women, *Preventing Conflict, Transforming Justice, Securing the Peace: A Global Study on the Implementation of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325*, 2015, p. 223, <http://wps.unwomen.org/~media/files/un%20women/wps/highlights/unw-global-study-1325-2015.pdf>.

13 Interview with representative from *Komnas Perempuan*.

14 Interview with representative from a Malaysia-based civil society organization working on gender issues.

15 International Crisis Group, “Buddhism and State Power in Myanmar,” 5 September 2017, Asia Report No. 290, <https://d2071andvip0wj.cloudfront.net/290-buddhism-and-state-power-in-myanmar.pdf>.

justification for advancing states interests through the use of force.”¹⁶

Sexual and Gender-Based Violence

Sexual and gender-based violence is increasingly used as a terrorist tactic and can also be an early indicator of violent extremism. Research on gender-based violence and violent extremism suggests that a potential predictor of national and regional peacefulness is the overall level of violence against women and girls.¹⁷ In recent years in the Philippines, for example, International Alert found a spike in gender-based violence in the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM), a region long affected by protracted conflict, instability, and insecurity.¹⁸

Experts also point to factors that exist particularly within conflict environments that may increase domestic violence, including “changes in marriage practices, an increased culture of impunity as law enforcement breaks down, and increased normalization of violence in general.”¹⁹ Studies further show that in cases where domestic violence is seen as a normal conflict resolution mechanism, it is more likely that those societies are involved in militarism and war.²⁰ Even when countries such as the Philippines try to address this problem with comprehensive domestic violence legislation that covers physical, sexual, psychological, and economic violence, courts are usually backlogged and corrupt, deterring women from reporting their abuse or taking legal action.²¹ The lack of women in the justice and security sector also creates “macho” environments where women may not

feel comfortable reporting instances of gender-based violence.

WOMEN DOING THE WORK

In conflict-affected regions, women have long been playing essential roles in peace and security efforts. In helping to safeguard their communities against violent extremism, they are recognizing early signs of radicalization, intervening to dissuade individuals from supporting or joining terrorist groups, and rehabilitating and reintegrating violent extremist offenders back into society.²²

Despite these efforts, much of women’s work in the P/CVE field involves advocacy to help officials from local to national government acknowledge and understand the ways in which their current policies exclude women. One way this is taking place is through the creation of formal and informal networks by civil society organizations that push for greater engagement with policymakers on P/CVE, including on issues related to gender inclusion and women’s participation.

In Indonesia, for example, a Working Group on Women and PVE includes 16 civil society organizations and serves as a coordinating body between these groups and the government. The Working Group has developed a five-year roadmap, with an emphasis on integrating P/CVE into a national action plan on women, peace, and security and on mainstreaming gender into the national P/CVE action plan being developed. Additionally, stakeholders have developed guidance and emerging practices on gender and

16 Valerie M. Hudson et al., “The Heart of the Matter: The Security of Women and the Security of States,” *International Security* 33, no. 3 (Winter 2009), p. 21, <https://www.mitpressjournals.org/doi/pdf/10.1162/isec.2009.33.3.7>.

17 International Alert, “Ask The Right Questions About Gender and Violent Extremism,” 9 January 2018, <https://www.international-alert.org/blog/ask-right-questions-about-gender-and-violent-extremism>.

18 International Alert Philippines, “Guns, Drugs, and Extremism: Bangsamoro’s New Wars,” Conflict Alert 2017, https://www.international-alert.org/sites/default/files/Philippines_ConflictAlert_EN_2017.pdf.

19 Georgetown Institute for Women, Peace and Security and Peace Research Institute, “Women, Peace and Security Index 2017/18: Tracking Sustainable Peace through Inclusion, Justice, and Security for Women,” 2017, <https://giwps.georgetown.edu/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/WPS-Index-Report-2017-18.pdf>.

20 Valerie M. Hudson et al., “The Heart of the Matter: The Security of Women and the Security of States,” *International Security* 33, no. 3 (Winter 2009), p. 19, <https://www.mitpressjournals.org/doi/pdf/10.1162/isec.2009.33.3.7>.

21 Georgetown Institute for Women, Peace and Security and Peace Research Institute, “Women, Peace and Security Index 2017/18: Tracking Sustainable Peace through Inclusion, Justice, and Security for Women,” 2017, <https://giwps.georgetown.edu/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/WPS-Index-Report-2017-18.pdf>.

22 Flora Bagenal, “10 Women Leading the Way in Counter-Extremism,” News Deeply, 1 March 2017, <https://www.newsdeeply.com/womenandgirls/articles/2017/03/01/10-women-leading-way-counter-extremism>.

P/CVE that provide a roadmap for governments and others to follow both at the policy and programmatic levels.²³ Global platforms like the Women's Alliance for Security Leadership, provide another platform for women rights and peace practitioners and organizations from Southeast Asia to collaborate on P/CVE efforts.²⁴

Given the importance of family within the region, there is an increasing focus on women's roles within their families and communities and how these roles can be better harnessed to address violent extremism. For instance, some programs work to empower mothers to take an active role in safeguarding their families against violent extremism by training them in personal communication and parenting skills and to spot early warning signs of radicalization.²⁵ Others also involve grandmothers, especially in cases where both parents may have migrated for employment. Nevertheless, policymakers and practitioners should exercise caution in making assumptions about or over-emphasizing these traditional roles of women. Women are not always best-positioned to spot or respond to early warning signs, especially where children may be hiding predilections or behaviors. They are also not likely to alert relevant authorities of their child's behavior, typically due to mistrust or fear of law enforcement and community backlash.

Other P/CVE programs by civil society organizations, governments, and international partners focus on promoting the social and economic empowerment of women as a means of building social cohesion and resilience against violent extremism. For example, through its program "Empowered Women, Peaceful Communities," the United Nations Women Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific is working with women at the community level to support their empowerment as a key strategy for building social cohesion by developing their business and leadership skills.²⁶ Relatedly, some civil society organizations in Indonesia

are working to empower the wives of imprisoned terrorists, both to address violent extremist views that the women and children may hold, as well as to assist with family finances while the husband is imprisoned. This further helps facilitate deradicalization and disengagement for the husband, who may be more amenable to participating in such programs after knowing his family's needs are addressed.

Although gender-specific P/CVE programs remain limited in the region, a number of relevant programs already exist that were not designed with P/CVE objectives in mind but have attendant benefits, especially in sensitive areas where there is a violent extremist threat or vulnerability. These include a number of programs focused on human rights, peacebuilding, gender and women's empowerment, and good governance, and many are helmed by women-led or women-focused organizations.

In Mindanao, Philippines, for instance, civil society organizations are providing peace education training for mothers and teachers, while in the Deep South of Thailand, a human rights organization is working on access to justice for families of detained and convicted terrorism suspects. Other programs aim to build confidence in a heavily male-dominated security sector by promoting the involvement and engagement of women. For example, a group of high-ranking women within the security sector in the Philippines has organized to push for gender mainstreaming and women's inclusion by simply drawing attention to their own presence and positions. They also lobby for the integration of peace curricula into security sector trainings; lead social, civic, and humanitarian initiatives; and promote cultural and arts programs.

In the Philippines and Malaysia, there are many youth-specific programs that aim to build resilience and identity early on. For example, one program in the Philippines aims to strengthen political

23 See Jacqui True and Sri Eddyono, "Preventing Violent Extremism: Gender Perspectives and Women's Roles," Monash University, http://docs.wixstatic.com/ugd/b4aef1_5780b931ae164ace83e5377c490f05e1.pdf; and "Building Government-CSO Partnerships: Implementing Gender-Based Approaches to Preventing/Countering Violent Extremism (P/CVE)," Commonwealth of Australia 2017, http://docs.wixstatic.com/ugd/b4aef1_c837c8e52e004944a3d4de051746e6fe.pdf.

24 Women's Alliance for Security Leadership (WASL), <http://www.icanpeacework.org/our-work/womens-alliance-for-security-leadership/>.

25 Edit Schlaffer and Ulrich Kropiunigg, "A New Security Architecture: Mothers Included!" in *A Man's World? Exploring the Roles of Women in Countering Terrorism and Violent Extremism*, eds. Naureen Chowdhury Fink, Sara Zeiger, and Rafia Bhulai, pp. 54-75, http://www.globalcenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/AMansWorld_FULLL.pdf.

26 "Empowered Women, Peaceful Communities," UN Women, Program Brief, <http://asiapacific.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2018/02/pve-brochure>.

leadership and civic action among girls to increase their representation in local government at an early stage and establish a future desire for political activism. A cultural heritage organization in Malaysia is reviving traditional performing arts in at-risk regions to connect the younger generation to their history and culture, reminding them of their identity and helping infuse grassroots pride to offset identity crises. Furthermore, Indonesia's *Komnas Perempuan* addresses the basic human rights of women and works with civil society organizations to develop standards and mechanisms related to gender discrimination. They monitor and report on discrimination against women that is written into law and, through the networks of civil society organizations they have built, they campaign and lobby the government to promote gender sensitive approaches to countering terrorism and P/CVE.

GAPS AND CHALLENGES

The achievements of civil society organizations and other stakeholders in Southeast Asia in pushing for a more gender-sensitive approach to policies and programs directly or indirectly related to P/CVE are notable. However, many interlocutors consulted for this policy brief noted that a number of challenges and gaps remain that will need to be addressed at various levels by a multiplicity of actors.

Integration and localization

Across the region, there is a lack of inclusion and operationalization of a gender dimension in P/CVE policies and programs at the national and regional levels. This is largely due to a lack of political will, failure to socialize the plan locally with communities or involve civil society, and little or no dedicated funding. Civil society interlocutors reported that they are not meaningfully engaged in national plans and strategies, which remain top-down and prioritize military or hard security measures. In some cases, interlocutors reported there was no space for them as civil society actors to even engage. Others noted that in instances where civil society organizations may not have (positive) relationships with their government, establishing an informal relationship with a specific government official who will be a champion for gender integration can help raise awareness of ongoing work.

Representation

A recurring theme throughout this project was the lack of representation of women within the security sector and in decision-making positions. To help address this marginalization, some local and national governments have introduced hiring quotas on the number of women in certain positions, or conducted specific outreach to ensure that women are at the negotiating table and in decision-making positions. It is important to note, however, that quotas alone are not sufficient to meaningfully engage women. Many of the positions filled through gender quotas tend to be administrative in nature, thereby perpetuating gender stereotypes.

Capacity and Resources

Civil society organizations in the region, including those that are women-led and women-focused, have a long history of working on issues related to P/CVE, including peacebuilding, human rights, and development. Many of these organizations are well-placed and have expressed a desire to undertake P/CVE programming but often lack sufficient capacity, knowledge, and resources to do so effectively.

Many activists and practitioners working in the field prefer not to use the terminology and framework of "PVE" or "CVE," because in some instances it raises unwanted attention and misinterpretations. Further, rigid funding processes can hinder program design and implementation, as well as the development of innovative ideas. Civil society interlocutors instead favor an entry point that focuses on promoting peace, building resilience, or empowering youth and women, because of the positive connotations of these terms.

Additionally, while there are growing opportunities for learning and exchanges among civil society, practitioners, and policymakers in the region, these are often ad hoc and require sustainability. Encouragingly, the Southeast Asian Network of Civil Society Organizations Working Together Against Violent Extremism was established in 2016 to support capacity building of civil society organizations working on P/CVE.

Research and Data Collection

Civil society actors, researchers, and practitioners all noted a lack of access to data. Without access to such information as individuals in prisons, documentation of those accused of terrorism, or even access to those in positions of authority who could provide data, research into gender, terrorism, and violent extremism risks being incomplete with weak policy relevance. Furthermore, some organizations have created databases and other platforms to collect data on gender and conflict, but lack funding and the manpower to keep these databases up-to-date. While funding for P/CVE programs can be limited, funding for databases that track incidents and trends without having immediate application can be even more limited, much to the detriment of long-term understanding of sources of conflict and the ability to assess potential correlations.

WAY FORWARD AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Leveraging the vast knowledge, experiences, and lessons from civil society actors and others who have been working on gender-related issues in the areas of conflict and violence prevention, development, human rights, and other fields are critical for P/CVE. Governments, both national and local, as well as donors and other interested stakeholders, should capitalize on the opportunity to build meaningful partnerships across all sectors to advance a more inclusive and rights-based approach to P/CVE. These partnerships, including with civil society, media, the private sector, and academia, can help raise awareness of gender-sensitive approaches that are being undertaken in communities to prevent and counter violent extremism, and to ensure women and women's organizations have a seat at the table when planning, developing, and implementing P/CVE strategies and programs. As the Association of Southeast Asian Nations and its member states look to adopt and implement their P/CVE action plans, strategies, and programs, they should consider the following recommendations to ensure gender inclusivity, especially relating to women's participation.

1. Ensure better strategic coherence and coordination among national and local efforts.

Governments should create operational frameworks and formal engagement mechanisms that facilitate meaningful engagement and inclusive dialogue and debate between national and local officials and diverse groups of civil society organizations, including those working on gender issues in related fields like women, peace, and security, violence prevention, development, human rights, peace-building, security sector reform, and good governance.

2. Invest, politically and financially, in national and local efforts to advance gender inclusion and women's participation in P/CVE.

Donors should allow flexibility in terminology and funding for P/CVE projects to test new concepts, facilitate better dialogue and submissions for funding, and report on activities. Stakeholders could also consider providing support for proposal-writing and organizational capacity building for civil society organizations, particularly those tasked with contributing to the implementation of national P/CVE action plans.

3. Facilitate trainings and programs that improve female economic and social standing and encourage greater representation in society.

These could include literacy trainings or programs to strengthen political leadership and civic action among youth – including girls – to help increase their representation in local government at an early stage and establish a future desire for political activism. Other programs could also focus on educating religious leaders on topics of gender equality and female empowerment to help them become better advocates and partners in building more resilient communities against violent extremism. Trainings could also focus on general paralegal services and access to justice measures to increase understanding of terrorism legislation and to increase the number of legal aides in communities that are overly targeted and prosecuted.

4. Partner with private sector companies to explore funding opportunities for new ideas and platforms.

Private sector engagement can tap into potential corporate social responsibility models that may allow for the private sector to play a greater role in the empowerment of women and girls and change structural, organizational, and cultural barriers to equality.

5. Engage with communications and media professionals to raise awareness of women-led P/CVE efforts.

Gender-sensitive media and communication campaigns can help raise awareness of the work of women-led organizations and can socialize communities and local governments to the role of women in P/CVE policy and programming. Such campaigns could take the form of writing op-eds and hosting radio programs.

6. Fund and share evidence-based, gender-sensitive research.

Further research is needed on the links between gender-based violence and violent extremism and

gendered pathways to engagement in terrorist groups. Stakeholders should invest in collecting, storing, and sharing gender-disaggregated data to explore such links and trends. Government agencies should apply relevant research and policy analysis from academic institutions, think tanks, and others to feed into P/CVE policy and practice, and share their own data with civil society organizations and other relevant actors, where feasible.

7. Prioritize the safety and security of women in P/CVE programming.

Donors, governments, civil society organizations, international partners, and others should develop and implement standard operating procedures to assess the appetite, feasibility, and security risks of undertaking activities designed to amplify the role of women in P/CVE within the local context. This includes maintaining open avenues of communication with local authorities and coordinating as much as possible with such authorities to ensure safety and security. ■

APPENDIX

Gaston Z. Ortigas Peace Institute – Philippines

Gaston Z. Ortigas Peace Institute (GZOPI) works with youth, women, indigenous people, and other marginalized groups to broaden the discourse on non-violent solutions to armed conflicts in the Philippines. They engaged almost 200 individuals from the Bangsamoro region in discussions about violent extremism and its causes, how women and their communities are affected by violent extremism, and their awareness of current efforts to address the threat. They recommend that local and national peace and security stakeholders develop programs and information-sharing mechanisms for indigenous women on family-based approaches to P/CVE; mental health training for teachers; inclusion of peace education in religious schools; livelihood programs customized to needs and age; a mechanism for women to report violence and abuse; and ensuring the protection of women when discussing violent extremism.

Mitra Wacana - Women Resource Center (WRC) - Indonesia

Based in Yogyakarta, the Mitra Wacana Women Resource Center (WRC) works to raise awareness about women and children's rights. Their project aimed to increase women's awareness about violent extremism at the village level in the Kulon Progo District through trainings in nine villages across three sub-districts. These trainings explored violent extremism in the Indonesian context, including the history of violent extremist groups and best practices for identifying and preventing violent extremism. Other activities included a seminar on women's role in P/CVE organized in cooperation with the National Agency for Combating Terrorism and the local government of the Kulon Progo district, a public radio campaign, and the development of a guidebook on preventing violent extremism and terrorism in villages, and the role of women's groups in these efforts. The project helped the women become more vigilant about violent extremism and intolerance and made them more confident to discuss these issues with their families and communities.

Persatuan Kesedaran Komuniti Selangor (EMPOWER) - Malaysia

Persatuan Kesedaran Komuniti Selangor (EMPOWER), which works on advancing women's political equality in Malaysia, explored trends, patterns, and the impact of extremist speech and actions directed at women's freedom of expression and how this contributes to an environment conducive to violent extremism. Based on case studies, interviews, open-ended surveys, and analysis of comments on social media, EMPOWER found a trend in the normalizing of extremism and misogyny through a range of everyday aggression played out in language, behavior, and practices. This culture proliferated through the internet and social media, and in turn helped to maintain and reimpose the status quo and the gender-power hierarchy in everyday life. In the cases examined, extremist narratives and actions sought to roll back the gains made in the struggle for human rights, non-discrimination, and gender equality in Malaysia.

Security Reform Initiative (SRI) – Philippines

Security Reform Initiative (SRI), a think tank that engages the security sector in pushing for key policy and institutional reforms, developed a training module on gender and cultural sensitivity and P/CVE for both female and male prison officers in the Bureau of Corrections and Bureau of Jail and Management Penology in the Philippines. The module aimed to increase the officials' awareness of violent extremism and P/CVE and strengthen their capacity to deal with violent extremist offenders, with an emphasis on gender and cultural sensitivity. The module was developed by a diverse pool of writers from academia, civil society, government, and religious institutions. Pilot trainings using the module were conducted and participants found it relevant, informative, and useful in identifying and evaluating existing interventions and procedures, as well as gaps in their respective units and agencies, particularly relating to gender and cultural sensitivity.

The Islamic Renaissance Front (IRF) – Malaysia

The Islamic Renaissance Front (IRF), a think tank focusing on youth empowerment and the promotion of Muslim intellectual discourse, examined the vulnerabilities and increasing influences of violent extremism on young women in universities and higher-learning institutions in Malaysia. Based on desk research, focus groups, and roundtable discussions, IRF found that extremist interpretations of Islamic doctrines, exposure to and influence of extremist religious figures, and influence of community and family members are factors that contribute to young women's inclination towards violent extremism. In some cases, young women were also motivated by a search for belonging or empowerment, similar to their male counterparts.

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